DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 421 219 PS 026 646

AUTHOR Landsverk, Ruth Anne
TITLE Families, Communities, Schools. Learning Together 2, Spring 1998. Bulletin 98221.
INSTITUTION Wisconsin State Dept. of Public Instruction, Madison.
PUB DATE 1998-00-00
NOTE 34p.; The "Learning Together" serial issues are produced twice a year, in the Fall and Spring. For previous issues, see ED 392 524, ED 402 500, ED 407 152, ED 408 029, ED 408 083, and ED 414 072.
AVAILABLE FROM Families in Education Program, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 125 South Webster Street, P.O. Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841; phone: 608-266-9757; toll-free phone: 800-441-4563.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; *Family School Relationship; Fathers; Interviews; Learning Activities; Nutrition Instruction; *Parent Participation; Parent Responsibility; Parent Role; *Parent School Relationship; *Parent Teacher Cooperation; Parenting Skills; Parents as Teachers; Partnerships in Education; Relocation; School Business Relationship; School Community Relationship; Student Volunteers; Volunteers
IDENTIFIERS Goals 2000; Quality Assurance; Rock Art; Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

ABSTRACT

The goal of the Families in Education Program of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction is to increase awareness of the need for schools to involve parents as partners in the education of their children. This Spring 1998 parents' and teachers' guide encourages school staff to reflect on how well their school or district offers opportunities for all parents to contribute or participate at some level and allows for parent discussions and networking. Articles from this issue contain information on the following topics: tips for safe "traveling" on the Internet; enhancing fathers' involvement in their children's education; obtaining the support of the business community in implementing a Family Learning Day, using Parent Quality Interviews to improve educational quality; tips for school volunteering; how Department of Education initiatives support parent involvement; using rock carvings and paintings as a family summer learning opportunity; involving families when students move to new schools; and the "Adopt a Nutrition Professional" program. Also included is a description of the types of family-community partnerships with schools, a checklist for schools on making the family-community partnership work, and a description of Wisconsin's Family-Community-School Partnership efforts. (KB)

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# Learning Together 2

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WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

# Families • Communities • Schools
# Learning Together
## Spring 1998

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Coordinator
Families in Education Program

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Madison, Wisconsin

This publication is available from the

Families in Education Program
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster Street
P. O. Box 7841
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7841
(608) 266-9757
or
(800) 441-4563

Bulletin No. 98221

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# Acknowledgments

This publication was produced with the assistance of the following individuals from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: Peggy Solberg, formatter and graphic artist; Jane Grinde, editor; Victoria Horn, cover art; and Neldine Nichols, program assistant.

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# Foreword

We all struggle to determine how schools can best help parents realize their own importance in encouraging their children to learn, but perhaps some issues are often too easy for us to overlook. I'm talking about survival issues for families. Every family has strengths, but families forced to devote most of their waking hours to feeding and providing shelter for their children—and those who cannot meet the rigors of doing so—are families who may be hard-pressed to join the PTA, may not possess the resources and resourcefulness to read to their children regularly, or cannot find the energy, and perhaps the fundamental optimism needed to drive home to children the value of education.

Researchers have identified four critical factors that sound simple but are often not basic to school-community programs and policies. Parents need:

- the physical and emotional energy to meet their own needs and their children's needs, including providing food, housing, clothing, transportation, and health care.
- emotional support for themselves to be able to care for their children sensitively and consistently.
- basic child development knowledge and understanding.
- realization of their own childhood history; acknowledging its influence, recognizing their options to make new choices, and mustering the resources to realize those choices.

In an effort to hasten the day when schools can proudly say, "We have no 'hard-to-reach' families here," I encourage school staff to sit down together and come up with real answers to the following tough questions. Does your school or district:

- help parents meet any of the above needs?
- offer "parent-driven" programs that include parents as partners in planning and implementing the program?
- offer opportunities for *all* parents to contribute or participate at some level?
- support and cooperate with parenting opportunities in your community?
- connect parenting opportunities with children's learning?
- allow for informational parent discussions and networking? Research shows that informal opportunities—opportunities that give parents the chance to talk and connect with each other—are essential to successful parenting programs.

Now, after school staff have devised their answers, I challenge you to sit down with parents and community members, ask *them* these same questions, and compare the answers!

May your answers be in agreement. If not, please read on in this, our Spring 1998 *Learning Together* packet, and call DPI for previous issues of *Learning Together*. Thanks for all you do to learn and work together for children.

John T. Benson
State Superintendent

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## *Families on the Internet:*

# *Tips for Safe Traveling*

*Excerpted from "Parents Guide to the Internet," published in 197 by the U.S. Department of Education. The full text is available on the Department's home page at http://www.ed.gov/ or by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN.*

Like most parents, you probably have rules for how your children should deal with strangers, which TV shows, movies, and videos they're allowed to watch, what stores they're allowed to enter, and where and how far from home they're allowed to travel. It's important to make similar rules for your children's Internet use and to be aware of their on-line activities.

You'll also want to make sure that surfing the Net doesn't take the place of homework, social activities, or other important interests. You might even set an alarm clock or timer if you or your child tend to lose track of time. This section offers tips for ensuring that your children have safe, productive, and enjoyable experiences on the Internet.

### Interacting with Others on the Internet

Just as we tell our children to be wary of strangers they meet, we need to tell them to be wary of strangers on the Internet. Most people behave reasonably and decently on-line, but some are rude, mean, or even criminal. Teach your children that they should:

- **Never** give out personal information (including their name, home address, phone number, age, race, family income, school name or location, or friends' names) or use a credit card on-line without your permission.
- **Never** share their password, even with friends.
- **Never** arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they meet on-line unless you approve of the meeting and go with them to a public place.
- **Never** respond to messages that make them feel confused or uncomfortable. They should ignore the sender, end the communication, and tell you or another trusted adult right away.
- **Never** use bad language or send mean messages on-line.

Also, make sure your children know that people they meet on-line are not always who they say they are and that on-line information is not necessarily private.

### Limiting Children to Appropriate Content on the Internet

Even without trying, your children can come across materials on the Internet that are obscene, pornographic, violent, hate-filled, racist, or offensive in other ways. One type of material—child pornography—is illegal. You should report it to the Center for Missing and Exploited Children by calling 1-800-THELOST (843-5678) or going to http://www.missingkids.org/.

While other offensive material is not illegal, there are steps you can take to keep it away from your children and out of your home.

- Make sure your children understand what you consider appropriate for them. What kinds of sites are they welcome to visit? What areas are off limits? How much time can they spend, and when? How much money, if any, can they spend? Set out clear, reasonable rules and consequences for breaking them.
- Make on-line exploration a family activity. Put the computer in the living room or family room. This arrangement involves everyone and helps you monitor what your children are doing.
- Pay attention to games your older child might download or copy. Some are violent or contain sexual content.
- Look into software or on-line services that filter out offensive materials and sites. Options include stand-alone software that can be installed on your computer, and devices that label or filter content directly on the web. In addition, many Internet Service Providers and commercial on-line services offer site blocking, restrictions on incoming email, and children's accounts that access specific services. Often, these controls are available

at no additional cost. Be aware, however, children are often smart enough to get around these restrictions. Nothing can replace your supervision and involvement.

- Find out what the Internet use policy is at your local library.

- Ask about the Internet use policy at your child's school.

### Encouraging Information Literacy

Show your children how to use and evaluate information they find on the Internet. Not all on-line information is reliable. Some individuals and organizations are very careful about the accuracy of the information they post, but others are not. Some even mislead on purpose. Remind your children not to copy on-line information and claim it's their own or copy software unless it is clearly labeled as free.

Help children understand the nature of commercial information, advertising, and marketing, including who created it and why it exists. Encourage them to think about why something is provided and appears in a specific way. Steer your children to noncommercial sites and other places that don't sell products specifically to children. It is important to be aware of the potential risks involved in going on-line, but it is also important to keep them in perspective. Common sense and clear guidelines are the place to start.

### Supporting School Use of Technology

You can encourage your children's on-line activities at home and at school. Talk with your children, school staff, and other parents about what on-line experiences are already part of classroom activities and what is being planned. Get involved by:

- Helping schools get technology, including used equipment from government agencies or businesses. For information on computer recycling, visit http://www.microweb.com/pepsite/Recycle/recycle_index.html and the Computer Recycling Project at http://www.voicenet.com/~cranmer/recycling.html.

- Helping your school and community participate in NetDay, a grassroots volunteer effort to wire schools so their computers are networked and have Internet access at http://www.netday.org/.

- Sharing your expertise by volunteering in the classroom or organizing training for teachers and other parents.

- Asking your local PTA to set up a "family night" on computers, technology, and the Internet.

- Helping schools develop "rules of the road" that are discussed with students before they go on-line.

- Joining the school's technology planning group.

## *Sites Along the Way*

This section offers a sampling of some Internet sites waiting for you and your children. (Addresses are current as of November 1997, but may change at any time. If an address does not work, use the search feature on your Web browser to enter the site name and get the updated link.)

### Family-Friendly Places

- The Franklin Institute Science Museum, http://sln.fi.edu/, offers on-line exhibits on an array of science and technology topics.

- Find good books to read, including Newbery and Caldecott Award Winners, at the American Library Association, http://www.ala.org/parents/index.html. This site includes information about authors, KidsConnect (for help locating all the information on-line), and educational games.

- Watch Live from Mars, audio and video transmissions of the Pathfinder's explorations, at NASA's Quest Project site, http://quest.arc.nasa.gov. Find more adventures in space, including views from the Hubble Space Telescope, at a different NASA site, http://spacelink.nasa.gov.

- Climb Mt. Everest, explore inside the Pyramids, and go on other electronic field trips with the Public Broadcasting System, http://www.pbs.org/. Preschool children can enjoy children's programming here, elementary school children can practice story telling, and teenagers and adults can take telecourses.

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- Join an interactive exploration of the oceans, on earth and beyond, with the Jason Project, http://www.jasonproject.org.

- Puzzle over optical illusions, take memory tests, and conduct experiments, on-line and off, at the Exploratorium, http://www.exploratorium.edu.

- Enjoy materials from the Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov, including exhibits on topics ranging from ballet to Jelly Roll Morton, Native American flutes to Thomas Jefferson's pasta machine.

- Read stories with your children, let them add to the stories told around the Global Campfire, and find links to other good family sites at Parents and Children Together Online, http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/fl/pcto/menu.html.

- Get educational resources through distance learning from Healthlinks, http://www.mcet.edu/healthlinks/index.html.

- Find information on blocking software from Netparents, http://www.netparents.org.

- Try the Air Force's new family-friendly site for kids at http://www.af.mil/aflinkjr.

## Megasites (extensive links)

- 50+ Great Sites for Kids & Parents, from the American Library Association (ALA), enables preschool through elementary school children to explore rainbows, black history, castles for kids, award-winning news reported by children for children, the Kids Web Page Hall of Fame, to say nothing of watching dolphins, learning lullabies, and much more, http://www.ssdesign.com/parentspage/greatsites/50.html.

- Jean Armour Polly's Fifty Extraordinary Experiences for Internet Kids invites viewers to make their own home page, visit the Kremlin, look inside the human heart, take Socks' special VIP tour of the White House, and make a boat trip around the world, http://www.well.com/user/polly/ikyp.exp.html.

- Berit's Best Sites for Children helps you learn about earthquakes, visit the imagination factory, and make junk mail jewelry, descend into a volcano, tour a human cell, go on a world "surfari," solve a crime, and fly a kite, http://db.cochran.com/db_HTML:theopage.db.

- Steve Savitzky's Interesting Places for Kids is an award-winning site in its own right with many unusual links, http://www.crc.ricoh.com/people/steve/kids.html.

## On-line Reference Material

- The American Academy of Pediatrics', http://www.aap.org, has a wide variety of information for parents concerning their children's health and well-being, covering topics such as immunizations, sleep problems, newborn care, and television.

- The National Urban League, http://www.nul.org, is a useful resource for tracking programs and events related to African-American issues. It is a rich reference area for students, parents, teachers, and history buffs.

- AskERIC, a free question-answering service provided by the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), invites people to submit their questions about education, parenting, and child development to askeric@askeric.org for an e-mail response within two working days.

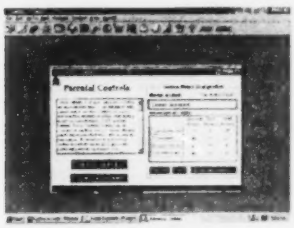
- B.J. Pinchbeck's Homework Helper, http://tristate.pgh.net/~pinch13/, is a wonderful guide to encyclopedias, dictionaries, reference works, and other resources on a great variety of subjects. The enthusiasm of its ten-year-old creator adds appeal to everything from the Ultimate White Pages to Bugs in the News.

- My Virtual Reference Desk, http://www.refdesk.com, offers dozens of links to dictionaries, encyclopedias, reference/research materials, thesauruses, atlases, sports, and entertainment as well as a search engine for locating more information.

• The Internet Public Library: Reference Center, http://www.ipl.org/ref, provides an "ask a question" feature and a teen collection, as well as sections on reference, art, and humanities, science and technology, and education.

## Sites for Parents and Parent Groups

• The Children's Partnership, http://www.childrenspartnership.org, offers, free of charge, the full text of its useful guide, *The Parents' Guide to the Information Superhighway: Rules and Tools for Families Online*, prepared with the National PTA and the National Urban League. A printed version of the guide, which provides common-sense guidance and encouragement for parents and tips and computer activities for children, is available for $8.00 from the Children's Partnership, 1351 Third Street Promenade, Suite 206, Santa Monica, CA 90401-1321, Telephone: 310-260-1220.



• The National Parent Information Network, http://npin.org, co-sponsored by the ERIC Clearinghouses on Elementary and Early Childhood Education and Urban Education, includes extensive articles on parenting, listservs, and links to more than 100 sites on education, health and safety, family issues and interests, and parenting and development of children from infancy to adolescence.

• At the National PTA site, http://www.pta.org/, learn about PTA education programs and participate in a discussion group, chat room, or bulletin board. The site also includes links to sites of many organizations concerned with children.

• The Family Education Network, http://www.familyeducation.com, offers hundreds of brief articles on parenting, links to local sites, and discussion boards that connect parents with on-line experts.

• The Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, http://www.ed.gov/PFIE, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, highlights school-community-business partnerships and includes a calendar of events.

• At the home page for the U.S. Department of Education, http://www.ed.gov, parents will find information about the President's education initiatives, college financial aid, and parenting publications, along with links to other useful education sites.

• The National Coalition for Parental Involvement in Education, http://www.ncpie.org/, provides a catalog of resources available from all its member organizations.

• The National Coalition of Title I/Chapter 1 Parents, Tel: 202-547-9286, helps economically disadvantaged parents develop skills to enhance the quality of their children's education.

• Parent Soup, http://www.parentsoup.com, includes an archive of answers to questions asked of pediatricians and child development experts and advice about helping your children succeed in school.

• The Parents at Home site, http://advicom.net/~jsm/moms, especially for at-home parents, offers e-mail pen pals, a booklist, and links to children's sites.

• Magellan, http://www.mckinley.com/magellan, uses a rating scale to evaluate parenting sites. To look at the ratings or follow the links, select Reviews, Life & Style, Family, and Parenting.

• The ASPIRA Association, Inc., http://www.incacorp.com/aspira, highlights its two national parent involvement programs, ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence Program (APEX) and Teachers, Organizations, and Parents for Students Program (TOPS). Each program provides a Spanish/English curriculum that strives to empower Latino parents and families.

• The White House, http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/New/Ratings, describes a strategy to involve government, industry, parent, and teachers in putting together a rating system so parents can define material they consider offensive and protect their children effectively.

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# It's Elementary! Uniting Schools, Children, and Fathers

*by Jeffry Jeanetta-Wark,*
*Fathers' Resource Center, Minneapolis*

We will do well to seriously consider the importance of father involvement in children's academic lives. It is time to make conscious and positive efforts to bring schools, children, and fathers together.

We can recognize and celebrate the fact that father involvement benefits both male and female children. It also helps families, communities, and our society to turn the hearts of fathers toward the children, and the hearts of children toward the fathers.

Research on father involvement in children's academic lives suggests a positive and lasting impact in children's cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development. It also suggests that how men relate to children is influenced by how they think about their role, how others perceive them, and whether or not they have a support system. But many children have no contact with their biological fathers, and are hard pressed to find any males positively involved in their lives. Keeping research and reality in mind, how can we help parents engender healthy and consistent relationships with men who are positive role models?

**Let's start with our language**

Begin to actively and positively use the words, men, fathers, dads, step-fathers, male role models, foster fathers. There can be many types of significant father-figures in the lives of children, i.e., uncle, biological father, grandfather, mom's boyfriend, or adopted dad. Books, academic records, handouts, and parent-teacher conferences can reflect this understanding, and can send a very healthy message. Some children may have more than one father-figure. Avoid saying that fathers "babysit" their own children; they *father* their children.

**What school administrators and staff of all grades can do**

- Encourage fathers to visit schools by making PTA meetings specifically welcoming to them. Hold meetings at times that work for fathers' schedules. Hold weekend events and request their participation and expertise in the planning, recruiting, and implementation of such events. Having a "dad rep" for school board meetings, or district-wide events is one way to honor the involvement of fathers.

- Involve grandfathers, as well as father figures, in special events and gatherings at school. Take time to send welcoming invitations to these men, and mail invitations directly, instead of having the child bring them home.

- Ask all staff at the school to be observant about assigned texts, school records, and handouts to ensure they avoid negative stereotypes regarding fathers, men, and males.

- Ensure that school principals, superintendents, special education administrators, and school board participants are held accountable for helping to involve fathers, and provide resources for every father who has children in the school district.

- Provide opportunities and incentives for teachers and all staff to attend inservices regarding creative and effective ways to involve fathers in their children's academic life.

- Provide school counselors, social workers, health teachers, and coaches the opportunity to attend similar inservices, but with more emphasis on effectively approaching, supporting, and involving fathers in the children's academic and personal life.

- Declare one day of the year to be "Fathers in Schools Day."

- From parent/family phone lists kept in the school office, staff will do well to ask for the father

in the home when contacting families regarding the child's school-related issues.

• Have a bulletin board in the schools dedicated to sharing information about fathers, resources, and healthy images of fathers with their children.

**What Teachers in Elementary Schools Can Do**

• Enthusiastically recruit fathers for volunteer jobs at schools like: hall monitor, visitor registration desk, tutoring, telling stories to all classes, recess monitor, or activity leader. Have them join with the field trips and school visits to the zoo, police station, etc.

• Host workshops for fathers supporting their efforts in reading to their children, and helping children read to them. Invite father figures to the library, have the children teach them how to check out books. Promote the "Mother-Read, Father-Read" materials.

• Host a special "Bring your Dad to School Day." Also, have fathers host their child's class at the father's place of work or his favorite place of avocation.

• Once per week, invite a father, (or a positive male role model) to have lunch with his child(ren); this can be fun and send healthy messages.

• Encourage fathers to share their arts or crafts with the school children. Many fathers sing, write poetry, dance, write plays, or tell stories. Find ways to weave their gifts into your curriculum in affirming ways.

**What Teachers in Secondary and High Schools Can Do**

• Ask fathers to lend their skills to events like: building sets or props for the school drama productions, playing a musical instrument with school bands, baking goodies for the annual fund raiser.

• Provide fathers with literature about the impact of television on children. For example, let fathers know that television may be better used as a chore than as an amusement or childcare tool for parents. Have students write papers or creative stories on what they watched. If children are computer friendly, this could be a good way to exercise writing skills. Encourage fathers and students to enhance their analytical skills while viewing age-appropriate programs together. Have fathers and students do a video documentary together.

• Invite fathers who are from different countries or who speak different languages to class and teach a brief unit on culture and language. Hearing a story or learning some words from another country can be fun and enriching for both the father and the students.

• Have teachers assign the children special tasks to be done with fathers at home or away. Here are just a few fun things younger students could do or make with their fathers:

◊ Create memory keepsake boxes. This is an excellent way for children to keep letters, mementos, special photos, even videotapes of their father figures when they live long distances from each other, or if the father has died.

◊ Create ice sculptures or a snow project during a winter carnival. Create spiderwebs and dream catchers for the spring or the fall.

◊ Take a walk outside together with a journal and record the sights and sounds around you. Try to identify any animal noises that you might hear.

◊ Keep a journal of books that fathers and children read together. Perhaps have father and child draw their favorite parts of certain stories in the journal. As homework, fathers can sign off when they have seen a book report and have talked with the child about it.

◊ Collect leaves and, after studying the names and information about the tree from which they came, press and label the leaves in a scrapbook.

◊ Plant a tree together. The schools could provide donated seedlings and materials for fathers to pick up. This activity would work well for Arbor Day, Earth Day, or Mother's Day.

◊ Do a unit in school on space or airplanes, or science projects on aerodynamics, then send home directions and materials for children and fathers to make paper airplanes together. At some point, it could be fun to have fathers come to school to teach

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the class how they make paper airplanes. Everyone could go to the gymnasium and try them out! Incorporate this theme and these events into journal writing, essays, and art projects.

◊ Assign the student and father to make a meal together. Encourage creative cooking, not fast food. They can take turns reading about recipes, and orchestrating the whole process. Here is a chance to learn about each other's favorite foods, as well as good nutrition, any family-oriented traditions, celebrations, or holiday meals.

◊ Throughout the year, assign a student and father to create something special for the student's mother, or sister, aunt, or grandmother, in order to honor female family members, as appropriate.

Imagine what it will be like when school staff, fathers, and families unite in common efforts to provide children of all ages with the opportunity to have that increased edge of personal and academic confidence, or to develop the sense of right and wrong. We have the means to bring this to our children while building that special bond between them and their father figure. It's simple to imagine —almost elementary. Now, let's make it happen!

*Excerpted from the article, "It's Elementary—Uniting Schools, Children and Fathers" by Jeffry Jeanetta-Wark, originally printed in Father Times, a publication of Fathers' Resource Center, Minneapolis, MN. Reprinted with permission.*

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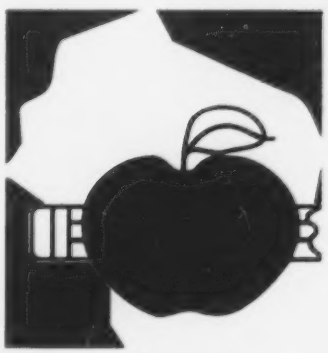
# Back-to-School Family Learning Day Gets Employers' Support

The first day of school is a big deal for families of students attending Northwoods Elementary School in Eau Claire. It's so important, that the school reaches out *beyond* parents to gain the support of a sector of the community that can prescribe the role many parents are allowed to play in their children's learning: the business community.



Julie O'Brien, a Northwoods parent who is paid a Title 1-funded stipend to act as Partnership Coordinator, made over 100 phone calls to the employers of students' parents during a five-week period before school started. She asked employers to release parents from work on the morning or afternoon of the first day of school so they could help get their children off to a good start for the year and learn about what would lay ahead. She followed up the phone call with a letter to employers detailing the school's plans for the day and why it was being held.

The results were extremely positive. Only one of the school's 427 students did not have at least one adult family member attend Family Learning Day 1997. Teachers did manage to meet shortly after the start of school with the lone missing parent.

O'Brien said most employers were very cooperative and willing to have flexible work schedules for the day, including scheduling parent-employees to work a different shift.

Only one employer was initially antagonistic to the idea, but had "mellowed" by the end of their phone conversation, O'Brien commented. Most working parents took vacation or personal time to attend the day's events, she added.

"It's really nice to see that businesses care about families and kids," O'Brien commented. Their willingness to support Northwoods' off-to-school effort also shows that "they really believe in the education system."

Planning for the day began about six months in advance. "Early in the spring of 1997 we started talking about how neat it would be if parents got a chance to meet and talk with their children's teachers at the beginning of the school year when everyone starts fresh," O'Brien said. The school informally surveyed some parents and school staff to find out if they would like to try such an effort and both groups indicated they would.

Parents were invited to attend a back-to-school day for families in an article in the school's monthly newsletter published in May before school ended and in a letter sent to students' homes in late July. The July letter outlined how the day would flow and encouraged families to register in advance for classroom and general school orientation sessions.

Parents signed up for one 45-minute general school orientation offered three times during the day in the school gymnasium, and for a 30-minute classroom orientation with their child's teacher. School-wide policies, goals and initiatives, and family partnership opportunities were presented at the general school session. In the classroom sessions, teachers talked about their expectations and what children would be learning, answered parents' questions, and then signed a parent-teacher-student compact for children's learning. Organizers helped families with more than one child attending the school devise a compatible schedule for the day.

On the first day of school, staff and volunteers greeted arriving families and gave directions. In the gym, families received a folder containing school information, a school family handbook, a directory of families, and a three-ring binder families could use all year to hold school information. Information booths and tables were set up in the gym for parents to complete and hand in school forms for free-and-reduced lunch, student health, before and after-school childcare, student fees, and lunch ticket purchases. People were also

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available to help answer parents' questions while completing the forms. Child care activities were provided for siblings in the school cafeteria. Families were free to go home after the orientation sessions.

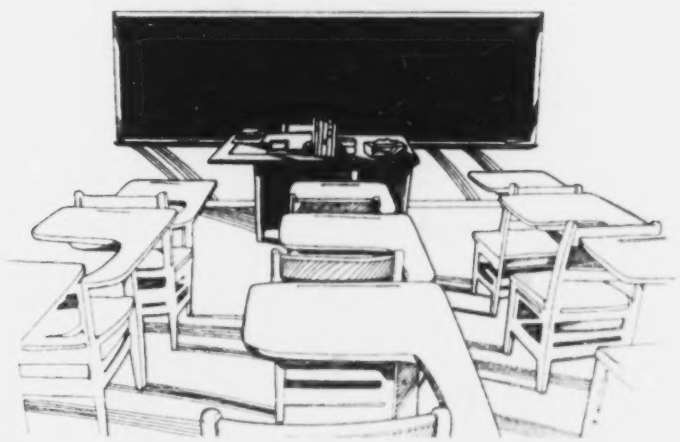
What were the benefits? O'Brien said parents were pleased to meet their children's teachers and start the year on a positive note, as well as have the chance to meet other parents. As a result, school-home communications have been better all year long, she said. Some parents have become involved with the school for the first time, while others have stepped up their participation in school activities and programs.

Teachers said they appreciated having time to explain the curriculum and expectations for children's learning before the school year was underway. Consequently, because parents and teachers had already met and covered some basics, they had much more time to talk about the child's progress during parent-teacher conferences in October. Teachers also noticed that the day helped children make a smoother transition between the summer and start of school.

Next year, the school plans to offer Family Learning Day activities, both on the first day of school and the evening before, to accommodate parents' work schedules, O'Brien said. Because one of parents' biggest concerns this year was about what to do with their children after the orientation, the local YMCA and other childcare providers are planning to offer a special childcare program for the next family learning day.

Northwoods has also established the goal of holding a similar opportunity in the spring of 1999 for parents to meet their children's teachers for the following school year and set summer learning goals. If that aim is reached, by the fall of '99, parents and teachers may meet on the first day of school to set learning goals for the year.

Northwoods' success is catching: other Eau Claire schools want to hold their own back-to-school day for families next year.



To ensure ongoing effective parent participation in the decision-making process, policy makers can work to create an environment where parents can:

- Attend open meetings on school/program issues
- Receive clear program goals and objectives
- Ask questions without fear of intimidation
- Understand confusing terminology and jargon
- Monitor the steps taken to reach program goals
- Assist their children in understanding program expectations and changes

**Standard VI—Collaborating with Community**

*Develop Partnerships with Local Business and Service Groups:*

- Work with community partners to hold special events, such as health fairs, technology nights, or other learning opportunities, to inform parents and families of community resources and services. Keep the events family-focused by providing activities suitable for both children and adults.

- Recruit school or program volunteers from senior citizen groups. Provide recruitment information that is highly specific about tasks to be performed, time frame, and specific program requirements. Find creative ways to show appreciation to seniors for their assistance.

- In the local chamber of commerce newsletter, include a request from the school district superintendent for employer cooperation and encouragement of parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences and other parent involvement activities.

- Furnish local employers with information sheets containing parenting/parent involvement ideas.

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# Hamilton School District Invests in Parent Quality Interviews

The Hamilton School District cares about what parents think. District staff care so much that they take the time to ask parents what they think, for example, about what their child is learning, if the school understands their child, how the school communicates with them, and if parents' expectations for their children's learning are met.

Since 1995, Hamilton has annually conducted Parent Quality Interviews—staff interviews during the summer of randomly-selected parents—in an effort to respond to families' needs and expectations and continue improving the quality of education. While parent-teacher conferences offer parents the opportunity to learn how well the child is progressing in the school system, Quality Interviews ask parents how well the school system meets the needs of their children and family, an equally needed perspective.

During the summer of 1997, the district paid $100 stipends to each of about 40 staff members to participate in a half-day of training and conduct five Parent Quality Interviews. Pairs of trained staff members visit the homes of parents, or meet at another convenient location, and spend about 60 minutes in each interview asking parents a variety of questions about their family's experiences with the schools.

District staff discovered that most parents are pretty satisfied with the schools and were pleased to be interviewed. "Parents appreciated the fact that we really care about and want to know what they think," said Margaret Bauman, Hamilton instructional services supervisor. "Often, parents just talk to other parents. The interviews have helped heighten an awareness among staff about what parents are thinking, what are their concerns."

Interviewers, teachers paired with other school staff, are trained to listen to parents' comments and to not engage in conversation or debate about what they hear. Parents will occasionally name individuals they are pleased, and not-so-pleased, with. Confidentiality is built into the handling of information garnered from the interviews. No names are included in reports. The district's public information coordinator is responsible for summarizing general information from interviews in a district-wide report and reports for individual buildings. Principals are the only ones who receive reports for their respective buildings.

Interview teams are responsible for setting up the times and locations for their five parent interviews. The teams all meet together in September to debrief. Teachers have been very supportive of the process, and about half of the interviewers returned from last year, Bauman said.

One of the most pleasant surprises, she said, is parents' comments about how they know their child is learning. Parents did not cite the expected test scores or grades. Instead, they said they knew their child was learning by observing the things she could do, the schoolwork she brings home, and the ability of the child to enter into and bring their knowledge to general family conversations.

The district plans to continue the Parent Quality Interviews to help deal with changing demographics and understand the expectations of new, suburban families who move there, Bauman said.

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# What's in the Parent Quality Interviews

Parents were asked specific questions about their perceptions of the schools in five areas, called "quality indicators." Following, is a summary about some of the things the district learned about parents' perceptions of each quality indicator, as well as the district's considerations about how it would respond to parents' comments.

• Understanding your child—Does our staff know your child? Is your child learning? Most parents identified school as a place where their children's learning, social, and personal needs were understood and their special abilities were recognized. This indicator was also named the most important by parents.

Based on parents' comments, the district will consider communicating changes in gifted and talented programming and staffing; providing additional information to parents about a learning center in the high school; and promoting the importance of all staff in creating a positive, caring school climate.

• Responsiveness and problem-solving—Are we there when you need us? Do we resolve problems? Parents were largely pleased with the prompt personal response from staff members in this area, but when they were not satisfied, often cited a lack of prompt response. Parents wanted staff to notify them quickly when their child was having a problem so that parents could help solve it. As a result of parents' responses, the district will consider emphasizing to staff the importance of a timely response and assess procedures for notifying parents when students were having problems.

• Personnel—Do our personnel demonstrate the attitudes and skills necessary to be effective? The great majority of parents found teachers to be caring, approachable, professional, and flexible. Parents also commented on the caring nature of non-teaching school staff who were kind to children and complimented administrators who made them feel welcome. As a result of parents' comments, the district said it will consider clarifying the purpose of early release days and publicizing to parents that art, music, and physical education teachers were available for parent-teacher conferences.

• Communication—Does our communication help you feel involved in your child's education? Parents gave this the highest of the five rankings. Parents were especially appreciative of a weekly elementary classroom newsletter, assignment notebooks, the fact that the high school newsletter is mailed home, teachers' willingness to call or meet with parents after hours, and homework hotline. The district said it would consider expanding successful communications practices to more buildings and classrooms, and provide more opportunities for parents to meet with teachers.

• Curriculum—what is taught. Are we provi-ding your child with a high quality education? Most parents described district curriculum as academically challenging and reported that teachers had high expectations for student learning. Parents specifically asked for more gifted and talented programming, advanced placement programming, and support for children with Attention Deficit Disorder. Other parents requested elementary foreign language instruction, said they were unsure of exactly what was being taught, or emphasized the need for ongoing guidance for high school students.

The district said it would consider sharing with staff parents' expectations for a more challenging curriculum, communicating the curriculum to parents, and ensuring that high school students receive ongoing guidance as they register for courses.

Parents were also asked three open-ended questions:

• What are the three greatest expectations you have of your child's school?

• How do you know your child is learning?

• What do you see other public or private schools doing that you would like us to do?

The most frequently-mentioned expectations by parents were for schools to offer a challenging curriculum, a welcoming environment, treating students as individuals, opportunities for learning socially appropriate behavior, and a safe, orderly environment.

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## Tips for School Volunteering:

# Your Love Made Visible

*A child goes forth each day*
*and each object he comes upon*
*becomes part of him.*
*For that day, a part of that day*
*For that year, or ever stretching cycles of years*

-- Walt Whitman

*By Hannah Pickett, Ph.D. and School Volunteer*

In small, almost invisible ways, school volunteers can touch a youngster's life—perhaps for ever-stretching cycles of years. For over two and one-half years, I have volunteered every Monday to work in Vickie Julka's classroom at Glenn Stephens Elementary School in Madison. We have worked wonderfully together.

What made my volunteering so wonderful? It had absolutely nothing to do with my education, with my profession before I retired, or with becoming a grandmother. I discovered that "working wonderfully" as a volunteer demands many qualities:

- caring for and enjoying children
- great patience
- deft observation of the teacher and the climate of the classroom
- acting as an extra pair of eyes, ears, and hands for the teacher
- an ability to work with the teacher's style
- an ability to work with each child's individual ways

*Not* included in "working wonderfully" as a volunteer are imposing your style and structure, and getting too deeply involved with the children. I've learned that it is essential for volunteers to observe and try to accommodate the style, the rhythm, and the structure the teacher has designed. It's a plus if you find yourself immediately admiring the teacher and the classroom. But it's far more likely that you will find the classroom a dizzying place with many children and a teacher all working in different ways. The volunteer must be ever watchful to successfully fit into this place and be significantly useful.

I was very fortunate to be assigned to a teacher whose style and structure fit my own personality supremely well. I have, however, volunteered in classrooms where I had to work much harder at figuring out where and how I could be useful. After all, volunteers are there to be useful, and it may take many discussions with your teacher to reach that end.

Getting too deeply involved in children's lives is a very sensitive issue. Children can very easily become dependent on anyone who works with them. Instead, volunteers better serve children when they help them to reach out to their teacher and their classmates, or achieve reading and writing goals and all the infinite possibilities that await them.

In all honesty, it is delightful when a child greets you with joy, but a "wonderful volunteer" works to help children be as delighted to get back to each other and their work. Volunteers facilitate and assist children in their work. Hugging and holding are easy solutions; being part of creating a caring environment is not all that simple. Children need to:

- feel your eyes on them.
- hear, "Good job."
- have your hands when they need your hands.
- try to read to you, try to write for you, draw for you. (Wait for the golden moment they really read and write, and you happen to be there!)
- have you respect their individuality.

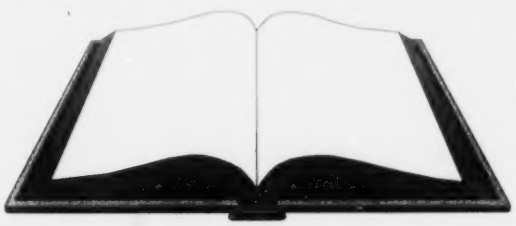
A short story about my encounters last summer, at the beach, at a mall, and at the Farmer's Market, will perhaps best illustrate the reasons for volunteering. On each occasion I was approached by a different young mother who exclaimed, "You're Mrs. Pickett! My child told me all about you and all the wonderful things you did together. You made Mondays so special! Thank you."

From behind each Mom would appear a youngster. One child I knew, and we really liked each other, but I don't recall ever working with the other two. Perhaps I sat at a table where they worked or walked near them on our way to the library.

I tell you this, not because I was so special. As far as I know, I barely connected with these two youngsters. But the three children, in their own ways, decided this volunteer was there for *them*, that I chose to be with them, and was available to them. Being there and caring is really what volunteering is all about.

members who do not have children. Everyone has a skill to offer that children can benefit from.

• Support funding for leadership development and team-building among school district staff, school board members, community leaders, and families. Sponsor workshops to help the community set goals for its children and their schools. Bring in reading specialists and teachers to explain the most effective ways to increase literacy skills.



• Help build coalitions to coordinate literacy efforts in the private sector. Contact your local newspapers, school districts, and other businesses to create district or regional efforts to improve reading skills among children. Establish a relationship with local schools to determine where your help is needed most.

• Provide books, videos, consultants, and other resources to schools. Contact your local school's administrators to determine which resources are most needed. Rebuild or refurbish school libraries so that they become the center of the school's literacy activities. Help to guarantee that schools have the most modern teaching materials, computers, books, and videos. Ask the school administrator about whether there is a need for your company to provide special materials and equipment for children with special needs.

• Start a community reading program. One good way to begin is to set up an America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! program. Provide space in your office building for the program's operations. Provide transportation for children and tutors. Encourage your employees to volunteer as tutors.

**Simple Things the Media Can Do to Help**

• Highlight successful reading programs. Cover stories about literacy events sponsored by schools, libraries, AmeriCorps projects, and communities and successful participants in them. Feature individual success stories and "unsung tutoring heroes." Provide information on how others can get involved.

• Provide free newspapers for school use. Train teachers on how to use the newspaper in the classroom. Start a Vacation Donation program allowing subscribers on vacation to donate their unread issues to schools.

• Start a Community Volunteer Alert Program. Publicize a weekly listing of volunteer programs in need of tutors. Provide contact names and numbers.

• Help your community learn how to help children read better. Publicize tips, such as those listed in this booklet, and information about how to get involved with local reading programs. Promote literacy resources available in the community for families.

• Keep families and the community informed about local student performance. Publicize school reading test scores and school efforts to reach high standards. Highlight a "student of the month" from an area school who has excelled academically in language arts or reading.

• Sponsor literacy-focused events, such as a "Get a Library Card Day," read-a-thons, book drives, or essay contests. Contact your local library or literacy program for information about existing programs you can support and for help in organizing such events. Publicize a monthly calendar of these events and a short item about the outcome of each.

• Support local literacy programs by donating advertising space. Produce a community public service announcement in support of reading. Publicize recommended reading lists for books that families can read with children of different ages.

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# Federal Initiatives and Efforts: Improving Schools by Improving Parent Support

*by Scott Jones, Coordinator for Student Learning, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction , and Eva Kubinski, Training and Research Specialist, Comprehensive Regional Assistance Center - VI*

*"Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children."*

***Goal 8 of the Educate America Act: Goals 2000***

The United States Department of Education (USDE) has stated that parental involvement is a critical component to effective restructuring and improvement of U.S. public schools. This emphasis on parent involvement is reflected in much of the recent federal legislation and initiatives. What are the effects of parent involvement on their children's education and achievement? How can USDE initiatives support parent involvement? What are effective parent involvement programs supported through federal efforts? This article will briefly review answers to these questions.

**What are the effects of parent involvement on their children's education and achievement?**

Parents have a crucial impact on their children's education and academic achievement (USDE, 1995). Research suggests that a collaborative effort involving families, schools, and the community strengthens the support systems available to families and can have positive effects on students of all ages. Positive effects of parent involvement include:

- Higher grades and test scores
- Higher graduation rates
- Better attitudes and behavior
- Greater numbers enroll in higher education

**What USDE initiatives support parent involvement?**

Many USDE initiatives support and promote the active involvement of parents in their children's education. First, the National Educational Goals stress the importance of increased parent involvement. Second, in its recently released national priorities for research in education, the USDE believes that parent involvement is one of three themes that should be addressed within each of the following seven priority areas identified for national educational research (USDE, 1997):

- Improving learning and development in early childhood
- Improving curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student learning
- Ensuring effective teaching
- Strengthening schools
- Supporting schools to effectively prepare diverse populations
- Promoting learning in informal and formal settings
- Understanding the changing requirements for adult competence

The USDE has pointed out that some questions about parent/family involvement need especially prompt attention. In a recent report outlining the framework for education research, the USDE Assistant Secretary and the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board emphasized that areas of particular interest include why some families and children succeed in settings where most do not; how parents can best support and encourage student learning; and how better connections can be built between home and school (USDE, 1997).

The reauthorized Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA) also contains four guiding themes, one of which directly relates to parent involvement: the development of partnerships among families, communities, and schools that support high standards of student achievement.

Finally, Title I of IASA promotes and requires parent involvement practices, such as school-parent compacts. These compacts describe the school's responsibility to provide a high-quality curriculum in a supportive learning environment, the ways in which parents will be responsible for supporting their children's learning, and the ongoing communication between home and school

(USDE, 1995). In addition, Title I requires that districts and schools develop parents' and schools' capacity for stronger parent involvement (USDE, 1995).

**What are examples of effective parent involvement programs supported through federal efforts?**

The U.S. Secretary of Education and the Goals 2000 Panel, in its *1995 Strong Families, Strong Schools Contest*, have identified several programs that have produced higher student achievement specifically through commitment to family involvement (The Partnership for Family Involvement, 1997). In one program, students identified as "at-risk" were paired with a mentor and participated in small group conferences. Parents of these students were involved in their children's education through the use of personal letters, phone calls, home visits, and through the opportunity to participate in a parent support group. Students in the program showed a noticeable increase in state assessment scores, better school attendance, a 50% decrease in discipline referrals, and greater involvement in extra-curricular activities.

Another exemplary school utilized home visits by school staff and teachers, a homework hotline, a school activity newsletter, and a parent advisory council to coordinate volunteer committees. The school held parent education meetings periodically and provided parents with information about topics such as adolescent development, career awareness, and the transition to high school. The school's "Buddy Project" allowed students to take computers home, encouraging families to help their children at home.

Programs and practices such as these, also practiced in many schools throughout Wisconsin, allow families the freedom and flexibility to choose from many opportunities to participate in and support children's learning. It's common for such programs to dramatically increase the number of parents involved in school activities, as well as hike the number of times each parent makes contact with the child's school or teacher, and step up the level of support for the child's learning at school, at home, and in the community. As identified in the research, when parents, schools, and the community collaboratively work together, students have a greater chance of succeeding.

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## Summer Learning for Families:

# Rock Carvings and Paintings

*by Bonnie L. Christensen*
*Director of Public Education*
*Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center*

**What is rock art?**

Before there were letters, there was rock art. Rock art, images that are carved, or painted onto rock surfaces, are visual symbols that ancient peoples used to convey meaning in the absence of a uniform written language. Even though we cannot understand the exact meaning the images had for the people who made them, they are still beautiful connections to those who inhabited the earth before us. They stimulate our imaginations to ponder what life was like for the people who lived where we now live. They encourage us to consider how their lives were different and in some ways similar to our own.

There are two types of rock art: petroglyphs—carvings—and pictographs—paintings, both of which exist in Wisconsin. Most petroglyphs were probably carved into the rock surface with sharp rocks, antlers, or bones. Some were made by pecking one rock against another. Pictographs were painted onto a rock surface. The color or pigments came from natural sources, such as charcoal, ground up colorful rocks, or plants (berries, nuts, etc.). The paints were ground to fine powders and mixed with plant oils, vegetable juices, milk, blood, or water to hold them together and make them stay on the rock surface. Colors that are usually observed in pictographs include red (ocher), black (charcoal), and white (gypsum, kaoline, chalky deposits). Occasionally, yellows, oranges, and bright blues were used. Instead of paint brushes, as we know them, twigs (sharpened or pounded), grasses, moss, fingers, corn husks, spongy bone, feathers, fur, or hair might have been used to apply pigment to the rock surface. Hands appear in rock art either as hand prints (positives) or as negative images done by blowing paint around the hand through hollow bones or reeds.

**Where is rock art found?**

Rock art exists around the world. Some of the oldest examples are in Europe, Africa and Australia. More recent examples are located in North and South America. The majority of sites in the United States are found in the dry southwest.

Most Wisconsin rock art is found in the southwestern part of the state known as the Driftless area. Glaciers that covered most of Wisconsin did not cover the Driftless area, leaving many rock outcrops that are ideal surfaces for rock art. Many of the rock outcrops are made of easily-carved sandstone. Rock art was made in cave walls, rock shelters, on rock walls, and even on boulders. The location of the images may give some clue to their purpose. Images done in relatively isolated locations may have been for religious purposes while those that are in highly visible locations may have been used for markers.

The first rock art was recorded in Wisconsin by Increase Lapham in an 1852 survey of the area. Sites continued to be recorded throughout the 1800's and early 1900's. In 1942, Robert Ritzenthaler did a survey that recorded less than 20 sites in the state. Currently, there are about 50 known petroglyph sites and less than 10 pictograph sites in Wisconsin. Archaeologists continue to search, and new sites are discovered all the time.

**Who made the rock art?**

Most of the rock art in Wisconsin was made by the Native American people who lived here before the arrival of Europeans. Since the people who created the rock art are gone, it is difficult to know if men, women, children, or special people within the tribes did the actual work. We do know that the rock art in Wisconsin was not done by Egyptians, Celts, or Phoenicians.

**When was it made?**

It is hard to determine when rock art was made. The rock art creators did not put dates—at least dates that we understand—on their work. In a

very few cases, radiocarbon dating can be used to date rock art, but, in most cases, this technique will not work. Archaeologists can also use a technique called "relative dating." The content of the rock art can sometimes yield a relative date if the rock image contains items that can be dated.

One example of a datable image is a gun. Since we know that guns were introduced in North America within the past few hundred years, rock art containing the image of a gun must have been done after the arrival of Europeans. Another way to relative date an image is if symbols are superimposed. The image on top, newer than the image beneath it, is compared to the more weathered image underneath. Although the comparison may not provide archaeologists with an actual date, it may show if an image is old or relatively recent.

The style of an image can also be compared to other rock art or even designs found on pottery. If the images are similar in style and content, they may have been created at the same time. All of these techniques only provide archaeologists with a very general idea of how old or new an image is.

**Why did people make rock art?**

Since the people who made the rock art are no longer living, we can only guess at who created the images and what their purpose was. Some groups today use rock art sites that have been used for generations. In these cases, present-day images may offer clues about why ancient rock art was composed. In most cases, however, the identity and rationale of the rock art has been lost.

There can be many meanings for rock art since there are many different types of images, in diverse locations, made by a variety of people at different times in the past. Some possible purposes for rock art include: use in religious ceremonies; a way to pass on traditions, myths or stories; for counting; to act as warnings; or to convey messages or challenges. Rock art images might have been used to identify tribes or clans; as an insignia; to record individual or group achievements and exploits; as property markers; or even games.

The list of possible purposes could go on and on. Archaeologists may never know exactly why the images were made.

**How can rock art be preserved?**

There are many things that threaten fragile rock art sites. Natural occurrences, such as wind, water, freeze-thaw, plant roots, mosses and lichens, all work to destroy rock art. Additionally, modern humans can have disastrous effects on rock art through intentional and unintentional acts. It is obvious that graffiti or trying to remove rock art will damage the rock images. Other acts like touching, climbing upon, rubbing or drawing over these images might seem less destructive. However, coupled with the fragile nature of rock art and the effects of nature, even something as simple as touching rock art can damage it.

Rock art sites can never be replaced. Once they are destroyed, they are lost forever. There are some simple things that you can do to help preserve rock art.

- Don't touch. Touching rock art can cause small particles on the surface of the rock to fall off.
- Don't make rubbings of the rock art. Pressing against the rock art can knock off tiny grains or small pieces of the rock art, changing the look of the image forever.
- Fires built near rock art can cause damage by depositing soot on the surface of the images and can fracture the rock.
- Some selfish people think they can own rock art and try to cut the images from the rock wall. Leave it intact for others to enjoy.
- Don't redraw or retrace faint rock art. Besides damaging the original art, your efforts can not duplicate the original.
- Don't paint or carve over existing rock art. Don't attach signs, fences or other objects to rock art surfaces.
- Don't disturb the area around rock art. There may be valuable information still to be discovered at the site. Don't dig. Watch where you are walking. If you find artifacts at the site, don't take

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them or move them. Archaeologists may be able to learn about the site by looking at things that might otherwise seem insignificant.

**Want to learn more about rock art?**

The following activities will help you learn more about rock art and archaeology:

- Visit the library to find books or videos about rock art and/or archaeology.

- Contact the state archaeologist to find out who your regional archaeologist is. Ask him/her if there are any rock art sites in your area. If so, could he/she send you a picture. Ask if there are any exhibits in your area on rock art or archaeology.

- Contact your regional archaeologist to find out if there are any amateur archaeologist organizations, or universities with archaeologists or anthropologists in your area. Getting involved with a local group will help you to learn not just about rock art but also the scientists who study rock art–archaeologists.

- Visit museums and archeological sites to learn more about rock art, archaeology, and the pre-European people of the state.

- Share information you have learned with others (classmates, family, friends, scout groups)!

**Activities to help you learn about rock art**

These activities will help you to experience what it was like for early rock art creators:

- **Create your own symbols**

Symbols are used to communicate meaning. In our culture, we use many symbols every day to communicate ideas without words, such as the symbols on the outside of restroom doors and the symbols that identify fast food restaurants. Can you identify several symbols that you use in everyday life?

Early people created visual symbols to communicate ideas. How would you communicate phrases, such as: Keep out! This is mine! Food nearby! You may also think of more complicated ideas to communicate: This is who I am. This is my family. This makes me happy. Design a visual image that communicate your ideas. Test it on someone else and see if they correctly identify your ideas. If not, think about how you can improve your visual image so that others will correctly understand your message.

- **Petroglyphs**

Petroglyphs are visual images that are carved or pecked into the surface. There are several ways that you can have the experience of carving one of your symbols. The young communicator can use a nail to carve her symbol into a foam meat tray. If you want something a bit more like rock, try mixing plaster of Paris (follow instructions on bag) and pouring it into a shallow box or lid. When hard, carve your symbol in the surface with a nail or sharp rock. To hang your rock art, insert a paper clip in the back while the plaster is still soft. For a more authentic experience, find a flat rock to carve your image into with a sharp rock.

- **Pictography**

Pictographs are images that are painted on the surface of a rock. The young artist may want to experiment with crayons or charcoal on a brown paper bag. Older artists can try painting (mixing dry tempera paint will simulate mixing pigments) on a brown paper bag. For something more authentic, paint on a rock and make pigments and brushes out of natural materials.

- **Preservation**

Rock art is a fragile and limited resource. One way to understand the importance of preservation would be to think about the images you have created in the previous exercises. Imagine displaying your images in your classroom or at home. One day when you view them, you see that someone has written or drawn over your original image. How does this make you feel? Does the image look like your original? Is there anything that can be done to bring your image back to its original state? Think about how this might be similar to people destroying rock art.

**Bibliography**

The following books will help you learn about rock art. You can find these and other titles in your school or local library.

Arnold, Caroline. *Stories in Stone*. New York: Clarion Books, 1996. (middle school)

Dewey, Jennifer. *Stories on Stone*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1996. (middle school)

LaPierre, Yvette. *Native American Rock Art*. Charlottesville, VA: Thomasson-Grant, Inc., 1994. (middle school)

Tinus, Arline Warner. *Young Goat's Discovery*. Santa Fe, NM: Red Crane Books, 1994. (primary grades)

**Where to see rock art**

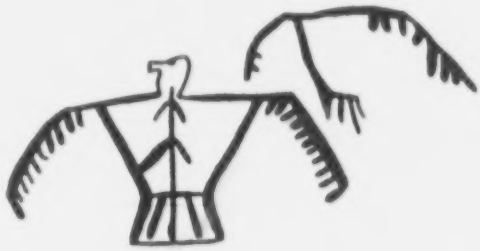
- Roche-A-Cri, P.O. Box 100, Friendship, WI 53934. Located two miles north of Friendship on Highway 13. Examples of rock art, including petroglyphs (carvings) and pictographs (paintings), are located in this park. This is the only rock art site open to the public in Wisconsin. For more information, call (608) 339-6881.

- Perrot State Park, P.O. Box 407, Trempealeau, WI 54661. Located one mile north of Trempealeau on Highway 93. There is no longer rock art in the park, but a new display in the Nature Center contains a life-size replica of rock carvings that once existed in the park. The park also has examples of conical and effigy mounds and the site of Perrot's early fur trade post. Group tours and a teacher packet are available. For more information, call (608) 534-6409.

- Jeffers Petroglyphs, Jeffers, MN, (507) 697-6321. Located just a few miles northeast of the town of Jeffers, this site is open during the summer months. The park has nearly 2,000 rock carvings. An exhibit shelter offers clues to the meaning of the carvings.

- When visiting parks, particularly in the southwestern United States, be sure to ask if there are rock art locations open to the public nearby.

- Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center's web site at: www.uwlax.edu/Colleges/mvac has some pictures of rock art in its On-Line Museum, and the Archaeology Club page will connect you to additional rock art sites.



**Who to contact**

- Robert Birmingham, State Archaeologist, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 816 State St., Madison, WI 53706, (608) 264-6495. The state archaeologist's office can give you the name of your regional archeologist.

- Bonnie Christensen, Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center, 1725 State St., La Crosse, 54601, (608) 785-8454.

**Classes**

Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center (MVAC) offers a variety of summer programs for children, year-round parent-child workshops, public field schools, workshops and classes for teachers, lectures, an Archaeology Day and a variety of other ways for you to become involved in the archaeology of Wisconsin. For more information, contact Bonnie Christensen at MVAC, 1725 State Street, La Crosse, WI 54601. Phone (608) 785-8454.

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# Moving Up: Involving Families When Students Move to New Schools

Transitions to new schools often confuse and concern children and parents. Research shows that family involvement often drops dramatically when children move from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school. Families may begin to lose touch with their children's schools and risk losing touch with their children as students.

To prevent this problem, elementary, middle, and high schools need to consider how they will prepare their students and families for the changes that new schools bring. For example, one high school designed a plan to conduct the following activities to help students and families move successfully from middle school to high school:

- March—school day meeting of high school counselors and high school students with eighth grade students at the middle school. **Families invited**.
- April—evening meeting with eighth grade students and **families** at the middle school.
- May—middle school students visit the high school. **Families invited**.
- August—orientation for ninth grade students and **families**, including ninth grade teachers at the high school before the start of school.
- September—open house night for ninth grade **families** along with families of students at all grade levels at the high school.

The school partnership action team at this school took the challenge to provide important information to all families of incoming ninth graders, including those who could not come to meetings held at the middle school or high school. A similar plan could help children and families move from preschool to elementary school or from elementary to middle school.

The accompanying charts provide a framework to guide your school's plans to help students and their families make successful transitions to your school, as well as from your school to a new school. Consider:

- How will you prepare all students and families for successful transitions to your school or to a new school? What information do students and families need before the school year starts? Which of your present activities will you continue or improve? What activities will you add to provide information, schedule visits, or conduct other activities?
- How might you work with educators and families in your "feeder" and "receiving" schools to develop, conduct, and evaluate your transitional activities?

Revise the charts to match your school year, account for more activities, or meet other needs of your students, families, and teachers.

*Adapted from Partnership 2000 Schools Manual: Improving School-Family-Community Connection, by Joyce Epstein, Karen Clark Salinas, Mavis Sanders, Beth Simon; Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, 1996.*

## Plan for Activities to Help Students and Families Make Successful Transitions to THIS School

| | Activities | Links to Feeder Schools |
|---|---|---|
| **JANUARY (before transition)** | | |
| **FEBRUARY** | | |
| **MARCH** | | |
| **APRIL** | | |
| **MAY** | | |
| **JUNE** | | |
| **JULY** | | |
| **AUGUST** | | |
| **SEPTEMBER** | | |
| **OCTOBER** | | |
| **Ongoing . . .** | | |

## Plan for Activities to Help Students and Families Make Successful Transitions to NEW Schools

| | Activities | Links to Feeder Schools |
|---|---|---|
| **JANUARY (before transition)** | | |
| **FEBRUARY** | | |
| **MARCH** | | |
| **APRIL** | | |
| **MAY** | | |
| **JUNE** | | |
| **JULY** | | |
| **AUGUST** | | |
| **SEPTEMBER** | | |
| **OCTOBER** | | |
| **Ongoing . . .** | | |

*Adapted from Partnership 2000 Schools Manual: Improving School-Family-Community Connection, by Joyce Epstein, Karen Clark Salinas, Mavis Sanders, Beth Simon, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, 1996.*

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# Schools and Communities Can Adopt a Nutrition Professional!

Schools and communities can help students become nutrition-wise if they participate in the "Adopt a Nutrition Professional" program. This initiative encourages schools and community groups to invest in their children's nutritional health by using the expertise of local nutrition professionals. It's sponsored by the Comprehensive School Health Programs Nutrition Connection of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services.

Schools, community groups, and professional nutrition organizations have received a brochure describing the initiative and the benefits to them. On a form attached to the brochure, individuals can indicate their interest in either adopting or serving as a nutrition professional. Once they have expressed an interest in developing a school-community-nutrition professional relationship, teachers and other school staff are connected to nutrition professionals by state staff at DPI and DHFS or by making their own contacts locally.

Through the *Adopt a Nutrition Professional* initiative, local nutrition professionals will be able to help schools meet identified needs, such as:

- Supplementing the nutrition expertise, skills, and resources of school food service and nutrition professionals.
- Enhancing the nutrition education of children and staff.
- Helping community organizations to connect with schools around the issue of nutrition.

The statewide Adopt a Nutrition Professional Program is modeled on a 1997 local effort by the Madison Dietetic Association.

**Examples of what adopted nutrition professionals are doing in schools:**

- Providing a monthly "Nutrition and Kids' Kolumn" to the school's newsletter
- Making up-to-date nutrition handouts available to the school nurses
- Receiving the "PTA Nutrition Coordinator" designation for the 1997-98 school year
- Working with principals, social workers, and teachers to extend lunch time by five minutes
- Helping organize and provide leadership to a school and community nutrition team

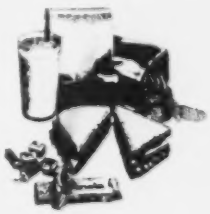
**Nutrition professionals in schools have also:**

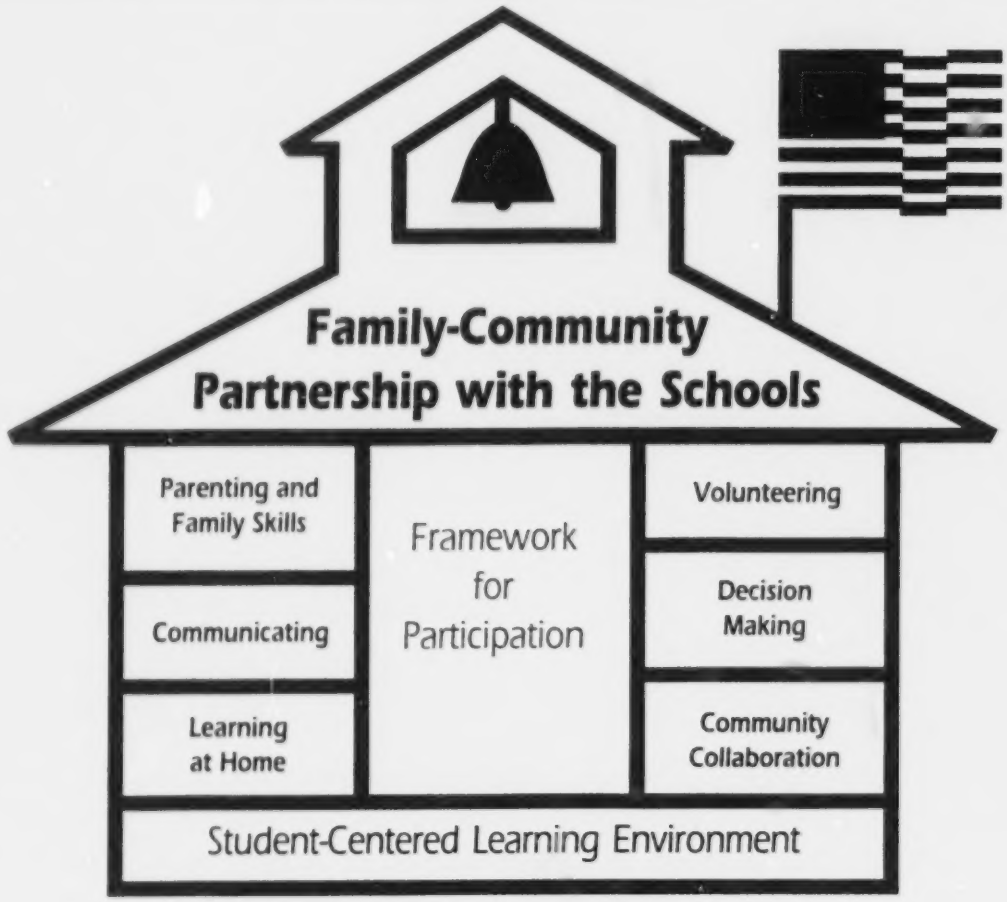
- Organized a school and community Team Nutrition coalition
- Organized public awareness activities including serving nutritious foods at community and school events
- Presented at teacher inservices
- Held forums to address tough nutrition issues
- Sponsored Nutrition for Student Athletes Programs, including making presentations and distributing materials to students, parents and coaches

**The program has worked with Parent-Teacher and other Community Organizations to:**

- Organize a school and community Team Nutrition coalition
- Present to PTA/PTO and Lions Clubs
- Offer nutritious foods at community and school events
- Work with teachers to survey students and parents about breakfast eating habits

Flyers describing the *Adopt a Nutrition Professional* Initiative are available upon request. Many resources are available to community nutrition professionals to make this partnership a success. For more information about the Adopt a Nutrition Professional Initiative, contact Julie Allington, Nutrition Education Consultant, DPI, 125 S. Webster St., Third Floor, PO Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841, e-mail: allinjk@mail.state.wi.us, phone: (608) 267-9120, FAX: (608) 267-9275.






## Six Types of Partnerships

**Parenting** includes the responsibility of parents to help their children learn and be ready for school. Schools can help by connecting parents to resources and educational opportunities in the community and beyond. Parents and other caregivers for children need to be involved in selecting and offering school-sponsored opportunities for families that build on their parenting strengths.

**Communicating,** which must be two-way, includes responsibilities for both parents and schools. Parents should be encouraged and enabled to talk with school staff about their children, and school staff should be willing to actively listen and offer support. In addition, schools have a responsibility to provide general information, including report cards and other student assessment, in a user-friendly and timely manner.

**Learning at home** includes helping students and their families make connections between what is learned in school, at home, and in the community. The focus is on learning versus schooling. Families and school staff can work together to develop learning goals and provide opportunities to learn at home and in the community.

**Volunteering** includes participation by parents and other community members at home, in the community, and at school to improve learning. Even attendance at school events is considered volunteering. The various contributions of all adult family members need to be appreciated. Some people can do more than others, but all should be valued!

**Decision making** requires parents to be accepted as partners. Parents and other adults need to be advocates for all children, not just their own. Decision making should include perspectives of low-income and minority parents, as well as majority parents and caregivers. Does the school governance structure allow all parents easy access to decision making?

**Community collaboration** recognizes that the community is part of the learning process. Community resources, whether basic or enrichment, contribute to the success of all learners.

# A Checklist for Schools

## Making Your Family-Community Partnership Work

Following are examples of practices and programs that schools and districts can use to encourage family and community support of children's learning. They are meant to be advisory and should be adapted to each school's or district's needs. Remember, *parents* are the key to planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating any effective practices.

### Parenting and Family Skills

- ❑ 1. We sponsor family learning workshops on topics suggested by parents, and held at times and places easily accessible to all parents.
- ❑ 2. We ask families what types of workshops or informational events they would be interested in attending and what session times are most convenient for them.
- ❑ 3. We provide families with information on child development.
- ❑ 4. We lend families books and tapes on parenting and parent workshops.
- ❑ 5. We provide families with information about developing home conditions that support school learning.
- ❑ 6. We survey parents to determine their needs, assign staff members to help address those needs, and work to link parents with community resources.
- ❑ 7. We have a family center or help parents access other resource centers in the community.
- ❑ 8. We have support groups for families with special interests and needs.
- ❑ 9. We train staff members and support them in reaching out to all families.
- ❑ 10. Other: _____

_____

### Communicating

- ❑ 1. We schedule parent-teacher-student conferences to establish student learning goals for the year.
- ❑ 2. We listen to parents tell us about their children's strengths and how they learn.
- ❑ 3. We follow the "Rule of Seven:" offering at least seven different ways that parents and community members can learn about what is happening in the school and comment on it.
- ❑ 4. Teachers have ready access to telephones to communicate with parents during or after the school day.
- ❑ 5. Staff members send home positive messages about students.
- ❑ 6. We make efforts to communicate with fathers.
- ❑ 7. Staff members make home visits.
- ❑ 8. Parents know the telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of school staff members and the times teachers are available to take phone calls from parents.
- ❑ 9. We involve families in student award and recognition events.
- ❑ 10. We encourage and make provisions for staff members to communicate with parents about the child's progress several times each semester.
- ❑ 11. We communicate the school's mission and expectations for students to parents.
- ❑ 12. The school has a homework hotline or other kind of telephone system.
- ❑ 13. We provide parents with structured ways to comment on the school's communications, for example, with mailed, phone, or take-home surveys.
- ❑ 14. We have staff members available to assist and support parents in their interactions with the school (i.e. home-school liaisons).
- 15. We send home communications about
  - ❑ student academic progress
  - ❑ meetings at school
  - ❑ how parents can be involved in student activities
  - ❑ Parent Association
  - ❑ student discipline
  - ❑ child development
  - ❑ the curriculum
  - ❑ how parents can be involved as volunteers
  - ❑ how parents can be involved in school governance
  - ❑ how parents can help with homework and encourage learning at home
  - ❑ community resources available to families
  - ❑ how parents can communicate with school staff
  - ❑ the school's philosophy of learning.
- ❑ 16. We directly speak to parents (does not include leaving messages on answering machines) if students are having academic difficulty or causing classroom disruptions **before** a crisis occurs.
- ❑ 17. We provide copies of school textbooks and publications about the school to the public library.
- ❑ 18. Other: _____

_____

## Learning at Home

- ❑ 1. We have specific goals and activities that keep parents informed about and supportive of their children's homework.
- ❑ 2. We offer learning activities and events for the whole family.
- ❑ 3. We invite parents to borrow resources from school libraries for themselves and their families.
- ❑ 4. We link parents with resources and activities in the community that promote learning.
- ❑ 5. We give parents materials they can use to evaluate their child's progress and provide feedback to teachers.
- ❑ 6. We help parents understand student assessments, including report cards and testing, and how to help students improve.
- ❑ 7. School staff and school communications help parents link home learning activities to learning in the classroom.
- ❑ 8. We include parents and other community members in developing children's learning outside of school activities.
- ❑ 9. Other: _____

_____

## Volunteering

- ❑ 1. We encourage families and other community members to volunteer their support by attending school events.
- ❑ 2. We offer youth service learning opportunities for students who want to volunteer in the community.
- ❑ 3. We help school staff learn how to work with parent and community volunteers.
- ❑ 4. We **ask** family members how they would like to participate as volunteers at their child's school or in the community and respond in a timely manner to those indications.
- 5. We encourage family and community members to become involved as
  - ❑ participants in site-based management councils
  - ❑ presenters to students on careers and other topics
  - ❑ assistants with art shows, read-aloud events, theater workshops, book swaps, and other activities
  - ❑ tutors/mentors
  - ❑ chaperones on field trips and other class outings
  - ❑ instructional assistants in classrooms, libraries, and computer labs
  - ❑ non-instructional assistants
  - ❑ from-the-home contributors of baked goods, assembling materials, typing, etc.
- ❑ 6. We offer volunteer opportunities for working and single parents.
- ❑ 7. We have a program to recognize school volunteers.
- ❑ 8. We gather information about the level and frequency of family and community participation in school programs.
- ❑ 9. Other: _____

_____

## Governance and Advocacy

- ❑ 1. We encourage parents to attend school board and site council meetings.
- ❑ 2. We assign staff members to help parents address concerns or complaints.
- ❑ 3. We invite staff and parent groups to meet collaboratively, providing space and time to do so.
- ❑ 4. We help families advocate for each other.
- 5. We involve parents in
  - ❑ revising school and district curricula
  - ❑ planning orientation programs for new families
  - ❑ developing parenting skills programs
  - ❑ establishing membership for site-based councils
  - ❑ hiring staff members.
- ❑ 6. Other: _____

_____

## Community Collaboration

- ❑ 1. We act as a source of information and referral about services available in the community for families.
- ❑ 2. We use a variety of strategies to reach out to adults, families, and children of all ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds in the community.
- ❑ 3. We encourage local civic and service groups to become involved in schools in a variety of ways such as mentoring students, volunteering, speaking to classes, and helping with fund-raising events.
- ❑ 4. We encourage staff, students, and families to participate in youth service learning opportunities.
- ❑ 5. We open our school buildings for use by the community beyond regular school hours.
- ❑ 6. We work with the local chamber of commerce or business partnership council and public library to promote adult literacy.
- ❑ 7. We have a program with local businesses that enhances student work skills.
- ❑ 8. We widely publish and disseminate school board meeting notices, summaries, and board policies and agendas, and encourage the feedback and participation of community members.
- ❑ 9. Other: _____

# Family-School-Community Partnerships
## Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

**Vision:** *All children will grow up in nurturing, healthy, and safe learning environments in which all families are supported in their roles and responsibilities.*

**Mission:** *Work with communities to ensure learner success and stronger communities through family - school - community partnerships.*

### The State Picture

Wisconsin's Family-Community-School Partnership efforts, funded with federal Title VI and Goals 2000 monies, **emphasizes local action and mutual decisionmaking** by families, schools, and communities to promote partnerships. The DPI is part of the National Network of Partnership Schools, a research-based effort directed by Joyce Epstein at Johns Hopkins University. DPI staff have focused development of resources and school teams on **connecting partnership practices with school-improvement goals**. The link between practices and student learning is critical.

State Superintendent John Benson's commitment to family-school-community partnerships is strong. He has:

- allocated Title VI funds for a permanent families in education staff person.
- appointed a parent advisory council that meets five times a year to share issues of concern.
- initiated a volunteer policy allowing employes to volunteer in schools, libraries and child-care centers.
- allocated federal Goals 2000 money to advance DPI efforts to spread partnerships statewide.

### Seed Grants for Partnerships

The current Families in Education program began during the 1987-88 school year when the state superintendent and governor proclaimed it the Year of the Family in Education. The DPI uses Goals 2000 money to promote family-school-community partnerships through conferences, resource packets, technical assistance, and seed grants to school districts. Most of this money is used to provide seed grants to school districts to help galvanize partnerships.

Since 1995, the DPI has awarded approximately 200 seed grants, ranging from $200 to $500. The grants are given to districts and schools that send teams of parents, teachers, administrators, and community members to an annual, statewide summer partnership conference. Teams decide how to use the money. They have established family centers in the schools, welcomed "waiting-to-be-reached" families who may not feel comfortable in school, improved communications, established family-school-community action teams, and increased awareness about the benefits of partnerships.

### Partnership Schools Network

DPI also uses Goals 2000 funds to support a network of schools committed to meaningful partnerships with families. For the past two years, **Network schools were each awarded a small grant to hire a parent partnership coordinator to work a few hours a week with family-school action teams to link partnership practices to improved student learning.** In 1997-98, 25 schools received $2,000 each. They use the family-school-community partnership framework that promotes six types of participation: parenting and family skills, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decisionmaking, and collaborating. In its work with schools, DPI partnership staff has found that it takes a budget and staff commitment to be effective. The national research bears this out as well. Even a small, allocated budget and staff add credibility to the process.

For more information, contact Jane Grinde, (608)266-9356 or grindjl@ mail.state.wi.us; Ruth Anne Landsverk, (608)266-9757 or landsra@mail.state.wi.us; or Peg Solberg, (608)267-9278 or solbepa@ mail.state.wi.us.